

the small paper. We note also that standard paper is given as 11×17 inches, which does not quite agree with that most used on this side of the boundary. An appendix shows samples of labels, of mounting and drying paper, genus covers and pockets "for seeds and mosses." (There is a much better form for mosses, by the way.) On the whole the directions are excellent, clear and simple, and in the neat form given them by the publisher, come just at the right time to help along the *renaissance* in collecting to be wrought by the Botanical Club of Canada.

OPEN LETTERS.

Nomenclature from the practical standpoint.

There is one point in this matter of botanical nomenclature on which, with all due respect, very many writers on the subject seem to have gone astray. It has been assumed that there is no reason why botanical nomenclature should not follow the same rules as zoological nomenclature, and hence the priority of names can be as rigidly maintained in the former as in the latter system. This may be very well in theory, but in practice the cases are very different. In zoology generally the scientific names are not in common use outside of scientific circles, while in botany they are. This difference is owing not only to the greater popularity of the latter science, but to the great development of horticulture among the people. In consequence the Latin generic and specific names of plants are used almost as often as some English equivalent, and in many cases to the entire exclusion of so called "common names." This being the case the attempt of certain botanists to change well known names of plants for no other reason save to carry out their own pet theory of nomenclature is almost as hopeless from a practical point of view as an attempt to revise and change the common names of plants in accordance with the individual taste of a certain school of botanists. The nomenclature of a science is not necessarily so much a part of the science that only scientific men can pass on it. Accepted usage has its rights, and generally maintains them whether in accord with theory or not.

A more analogous case, it seems to me, is that of geographical nomenclature. Here also popular usage is a factor, and at once the folly of trying to lay down strict, inviolable rules becomes apparent. Time and time again have the good old historical names been supplanted by names of modern origin, and it would be well nigh useless to make even an attempt to restore them unless the attempt is to be made by authority of the government, not of the individual. Just here appears one of the weakest points of the "strict priority rule" of botanical nomenclature — that it is the creation of the individual, not only unsupported by such governmental botanical authority as we possess, but directly opposed to it in many important particulars. In other words, individual opinion tries to oppose such botanical consensus as we now have in order to carry out its own private theory.

The right of the people to well known botanical names in common use is not likely to obtain much consideration from the herbarium botanist, neither is the application of a statute of limitations to fix definitely the acceptance of such names, yet there is good legal analogy for such a method of treatment, and it would be the business-like and the most familiar way to deal with the subject from a practical standpoint. The advocates of the "strict priority rule" no doubt started with the best intentions and after much careful consideration, but it now seems as if they regarded more the framing and enforcement of an easy rule to follow than a practical rule to secure the most good. Surely their attempts to simplify botanical nomenclature have not given us much relief as yet, and in very many cases show more the ill-directed zeal of the pedant, than the calm, deliberate, common sense judgment of the master. In their attempt to suppress individual dictation in specific cases they claim for themselves the right to dictate the acceptance of a rule that many of us are far from being convinced is the only rule to be followed. We must take the *ipse dixit* dose at the outset instead of later: that is all! Moreover recent events show that this rule, like any rule based on historical facts, does admit of difference of opinion in specific cases, the very evil, I judge, they sought to avoid. Altogether the present condition of botanical nomenclature shows the usual result of allowing theorists to deal with practical matters; for I maintain most stoutly that botanical nomenclature is a living, practical, popular question, and deserves to receive common sense, business-like treatment where there is need of it.

What I have said applies only of course to the so-called "strict priority rule," that extreme, that hard-and-fast rule which enforces priority without exception, reasonable or unreasonable. That priority furnishes a sound foundation for a satisfactory system of nomenclature seems to me beyond dispute, and the work that is being done in many directions is most useful and helpful. When, however, the application of the rule becomes more an object than the avoidance of confusion, when the digging up of long dead, often still-born names becomes of more importance than the retention of names well known and for years accepted by both popular and scientific usage, then many of us feel that temperance is indeed a virtue in questions of botanical nomenclature as well as in other matters of life. Let us at least wait for the action of a Botanical Congress possessing authority, before we accept the tyranny of a rule that knows no exception, listens to no reason, and claims for itself with very little justice, the inviolability of a natural law.—EDWARD L. RAND, *Boston, Mass.*

NOTES AND NEWS.

Dr. A. W. SCHIMPER, of Bonn, has declined a call to the University of Marburg on account of his health.

OUR ATTENTION has just been called to a misleading error on page 199 which escaped correction in the proof. In line 16 from the bottom *Pirus* should read *Pinus*.